

R 130916Z AUG 08
FM AMEMBASSY MBABANE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3192
INFO SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY

UNCLAS MBABANE 000244

DEPT FOR AF/S (MHARRIS)

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ELAB](#) [ETRD](#) [KDEM](#) [WZ](#) [ZI](#)

SUBJECT: TRADE UNIONS CHALLENGE SWAZI DEMOCRACY, MAKE COMPARISONS
TO ZIMBABWE

11. SUMMARY: On July 21, the Southern African Trade Union Coordinating Council (SATUCC), a regional labor umbrella organization, called for a boycott of goods destined for Zimbabwe and Swaziland. On August 10-11, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), a SATUCC member, hosted a Zimbabwe-Swaziland Solidarity Conference that explored scenarios for achieving democratic change. COSATU is trying to capitalize on the international attention Zimbabwe is receiving by linking it with Swaziland's democratic shortcomings. COSATU is preparing a hostile reception for King Mswati III (HMK) and President Mugabe at the August 16-17 SADC Heads of State Summit in Johannesburg. COSATU has also announced plans for a week long boycott of goods destined for Swaziland and Zimbabwe in September. END SUMMARY

ZIMBABWE-SWAZILAND SOLIDARITY CONFERENCE

12. On August 10, COSATU hosted the Zimbabwe-Swaziland Solidarity Conference in South Africa. The conference concluded with a vague and undefined strategy for targeting the Government of the Kingdom of Swaziland (GKOS). COSATU Secretary General Zwelinzima Vavi described HMK and the Swazi monarchy as an extension of British colonial control. COSATU SecGen Vavi has repeatedly announced that HMK and President Mugabe are not welcome in South Africa, and wide spread protests are planned upon their arrival in South Africa for the August 16-17 SADC Heads of State Summit in Johannesburg. COSATU sees this as the beginning of a "sustainable solidarity offensive" against King Mswati III and President Mugabe, and has created a SADC Campaign Coordinating Committee to manage the effort. Their goal is to isolate the leaders through a "sustained, massive" publicity campaign. COSATU will also oppose and lobby against the election of Swaziland to the SADC Chair of the Organ on Politics, Security and Defense.

IMPLICATIONS OF BOYCOTT ON SWAZILAND

13. COSATU announced on August 12 that it is planning a week-long boycott of goods destined for Zimbabwe and Swaziland in September. Regarding the scope of the boycott, COSATU international secretary Bongani Masuku told EmbOff on August 13 that it could include electricity, since Swaziland imports this commodity. It is likely that COSATU will try to hold the boycott in the first week of September during the 40/40 national celebrations. Several regional heads of state are expected in Swaziland on September 5-6 for the celebrations, and the disruptions caused by a boycott would be highly embarrassing to GKOS and HMK. COSATU demonstrated that it is capable of mobilizing the region and confronting any actor or government in April, with refusal to unload the An Yue Jiang, the ship carrying Chinese arms destined for Zimbabwe.. Swaziland -- land-locked, importing 80 percent of its food from South Africa, reliant on South Africa and Mozambique for electricity, and without any strong regional allies -- is a "soft" target. Any transport boycott will have tremendous and immediate consequences.

14. COMMENT: The attention of Southern African trade organizations towards Swaziland is likely a by-product of the massive regional mobilization against the Government of Zimbabwe. Should COSATU and SATUCC mobilize any type of commercial transport boycott, the implications for Swaziland would be tremendous and impossible for GKOS and King Mswati to ignore, and would necessitate immediate resolution. With Swaziland on the eve of elections and 40/40 national celebrations, it is especially vulnerable to international criticism and negative attention. Post will immediately advise as situation develops and more information becomes available.

PARKER